

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-12 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02

INR-09 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14

USIA-12 AID-20 PC-04 INRE-00 OMB-01 RSR-01 /146 W

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P 240900 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3708

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KAMPALA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KIGALI PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUJUMBURA 363

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, SREF, BY, TZ,

SUBJECT: BURUNDI INCIDENT

REF DAR ES SALAAM 987, BUJUMBURA 358 NOTAL

1. IN FIRST REFERENCE IN LOCAL MEDIA TO TANZANIAN BORDER INCIDENT, MARCH 23 ISSUE OF GRB NEWS BULLETIN PUBLISHED STATEMENT MADE BY FONMIN SIMBANIYE TO AFP REPORTER PREVIOUS DAY. FONMIN IS QUOTED AS SAYING, " AT NO MOMENT DURING THE POLICE OPERATIONS CARRIED OUT BY BURUNDI ARMY BETWEEN MARCH 10 AND 21 DID EITHER BURUNDI ARMY OR BURUNDI AIRCRAFT CROSS TANZANIAN FRONTIER."

2. IN FIRST PUBLIC REFERENCE TO ATTACK ON ARMY JEEP (BUJUMBURA REFTTEL), FONMIN EXPLAINED THAT BURUNDI MILITARY SWEEP ORGANIZED IN RESPONSE THAT ATTACK HAD DESTROYED TWO REBEL CAMPS ABOUT 500 METERS INSIDE BURUNDI FRONTIER, FORCING "600" REBELS TO FLEE ACROSS BORDER. HE STATED DOCUMENTS SEIZED SHOWED REBELS WERE PLANNING ATTACK ON BURUNDI IN LATE MARCH OR EARLY APRIL. SIMBANANIYE SAID HE HAD NO
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IDEA WHETHER REBELS HAD SUPPORT FROM WITHIN TANZANIA BUT WOULD BE SURPRISED LEARN THEY DID, SINCE THAT WOULD MEAN TANZANIA HAD AGREED TO SERVE " AS BASE FOR SUBVERSION AGAINST FRIENDLY COUNTRY."

3. EMBASSY RECEIVING CONFLICTING REPORTS ON FACTS OF SITUATION FROM LOCAL BELGIAN AND FRENCH SOURCES. FRENCH, RELYING ON UNIDENTIFIED " EYE- WITNESS" (PRESUMABLY FRENCH MILITARY ADVISER), GENERALLY SUPPORT SIMBANANIYE LINE, ADDING ONLY THAT MORTARS WERE ALSO USED. BELGIANS, RELYING ON CASUALLY OVERHEARD CONVERSATIONS IN WHICH BURUNDI ARMY OFFICERS WHO WERE ON SWEEP TOLD OTHERS WHAT HAPPENED, STATE ONE CAMP, FIVE KILOMETERS WITHIN TANZANIA, WAS ATTACKED, WITH MORTARS. AFTERWARD ELEMENTS OF BURUNDI ARMY MOVED INTO NOW- DESERTED CAMP, FINDING ROUGHLY NUMBER BODIES CITED BY TANZANIANS. AT SOME POINT THESE ARMY ELEMENTS HAD OBVIOUSLY CROSSED TANZANIAN BORDER. BOTH SOURCES AGREE, HOWEVER, THAT THERE HAVE BEEN NO SIGNS OF USE OF AIRCRAFT IN OPERATION.

4. SIMBANANIYE ALSO DENIED RECENT CLAIMS BY SWEDISH PENTACOSTAL MISSIONARY SOURCES IN TANZANIA THAT HUTU MASSACRES HAD RESTARTED IN BURUNDI. EMBASSY HAS NO INFORMATION TO SUPPORT SUCH A CLAIM.

5. COMMENT: FRENCH AND BELGIAN AMBASSADORS EACH CONVINCED HIS VERSION ON EVENTS CORRECT AND THERE HAS BEEN SOME DISPLAY OF ILL- TEMPER ON SUBJECT. JUDGING ON BASIS ORIGINAL SOURCES AND OVERALL FAMILIARITY WITH BURUNDI SCENE, AS WELL AS APPARENT FACTUALITY TANZANIAN REPORTS, IT APPEARS BELGIAN VERSION LIKELY PROVE NEARER TRUTH.
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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts:
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 MAR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: garlanwa
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973BUJUMB00363
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: BUJUMBURA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730337/aaaaifuh.tel
Line Count: 100
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: garlanwa
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 AUG 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <29-Aug-2001 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <30-Oct-2001 by garlanwa>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> srp 971223
Subject: BURUNDI INCIDENT
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, SREF, BY, TZ
To: AF
SECSTATE WASHDC INFO BRUSSELS
DAR ES SALAAM
KAMPALA
MULTIPLE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

